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Application No. 10/660,681

EXPOSURE METHOD AND APPARATUS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention generally relates to exposure, and, more particularly, to an exposure method and apparatus for fabricating various types of devices such as semiconductor chips, such as ICs and LSIs, display devices, such as liquid crystal panels, a detection device, such as thin film magnetic heads, and image pickup devices, such as CCDs.

[0002] In manufacturing fine semiconductor devices such as a semiconductor memory and a logic circuit in photolithography technology, a reduction projection exposure apparatus has been conventionally employed, which uses a projection optical system to project a circuit pattern formed on a mask (reticle) onto a wafer, etc., to transfer the circuit pattern.

[0003] Recent demands for smaller and finer electronic apparatuses have increasingly called for fine processing to semiconductor devices mounted onto the electronic apparatuses. The critical dimension transferable by the projection exposure apparatus or resolution is inappropriate to a wavelength of light used for exposure, and inversely proportionate to the numerical aperture ("NA") of the projection optical system. Since the shorter the wavelength is and the higher the NA is, the better the resolution becomes, a wavelength of exposure light is made shorter and the NA of a projection optical system is made higher.

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Please amend the specification by cancelling the current specification and inserting the
substitute specification being filed concurrently herewith.